

Ethics for Educators

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Plan for the Session

- Introductions and overview
- Dilemmas as competing goods
- Kidder's paradigm and panel examples
- Paired discussion of dilemmas
 - Invitation to share 2-3
- Integrative case study
- Resources and next steps

Kidder's Paradigm and Examples

- Justice vs. Mercy
- Truth vs. Loyalty
- Long-Term vs. Short-Term
- Individual vs. Other/Community

Resources for Addressing Dilemmas (see handout)

- “Teaching circles”
- Peer, mentor or administrative consultation
- Books and articles
- Policy changes

Case study

Dilemmas involving student attendance on social work courses in a 'research intensive' UK university

Pressures on student attendance

- The need to work part-time (exacerbated in terms of their time management by the demands of 'flexible' working) as fees continue to rise significantly but funding sources (such as government funded bursaries) remain static.
- The (likely) disproportionate impact of this need to self-fund, via part time work, on students from backgrounds involving some disadvantage, from 'non-traditional' routes to education, and from students who were at one time social work *service users* (for example in the care system, criminal justice system, drug rehabilitation) - all of whom we would want to have as participants of the student cohort but who are likely to be working as well as studying (see Hall, 2010 for an overview of the impact of work alongside study).

Compounding factors on attendance

- The resultant shift towards 'consumer rights' rather than 'reciprocal obligations' as a result of fee structures which means a challenge to attendance ordinances
- Relative to the rest of the Faculty, a higher incidence of disability (particularly dyslexia); but increasingly also mental health issues among social work students on our courses which may result in compounding pressures to those noted above
- Hall, R (2010) The work–study relationship: experiences of full-time university students undertaking part-time employment *Journal of Education and Work* 23(5)

in tension with

- The need for high levels of attendance due to the preponderance of group-based study and activity and group-based assessments on the course (so, the potential for 'freeloading' among students with poor attendance)
(individual versus community / truth versus loyalty)
- The expectations of future service users that their social workers will have knowledge and skills that will best be required through high levels of attendance on the course
(individual versus community / short term versus long term)

in tension with

- The need to develop and demonstrate more than just 'competencies' (Clark, 2000) - which may well suffice on other Faculty courses (for example the fulfilling of assessment criteria), but not in the more 'rounded' and multi-disciplinary nature of social work education (*short term versus long term*)
- The existence in the social work programmes of a clearly defined, numerical attendance threshold which is expected to be adhered to: is this a guide to be negotiated depending on context or a metric to be upheld (*justice versus mercy*)?
- What about *social justice*?

Resolution

Some recent context

‘You research active staff can now get back to writing papers which only two people will read’

The *temptation* to respond:

‘Thanks, but without our research profile the department may close, so our research is keeping us all (including you) in a job’

Drawing on Kidder's paradigms....

Due to the pressure from the University to deliver – particular types of - research 'outputs', there *may* be a bias developing towards thinking around *individual and short term* actions; ironically the *collective* future of the department may depend on staff behaving in this way.

In the specific case of student attendance this would extend to more of a *justice* approach because exploring the *mercy* angle (ironically, in line with much of the value base we try to instil in students) is simply more time-consuming and complex - and time, to juggle teaching and research commitments, is at a premium.

What direction is this taking?

From the perspective just of the survival of the social work department in a research university, it would be helpful if:

1. Students did not arrive with complexities in their lives, such as challenging backgrounds, disabilities, the need to work long hours, and from non-traditional routes into education (although we have funding-based targets on this...)
 2. We could employ a *justice* approach to student attendance
- To continue to work with students we would *like* to see on our social work programmes (see above!) there is an inherent organizational tension *in the current climate*.
 - The alternative is to relocate social work away from research universities, which would effectively signal that social work does not somehow 'belong' in a research environment.